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Charles Dickens: Life, Work and Legacy

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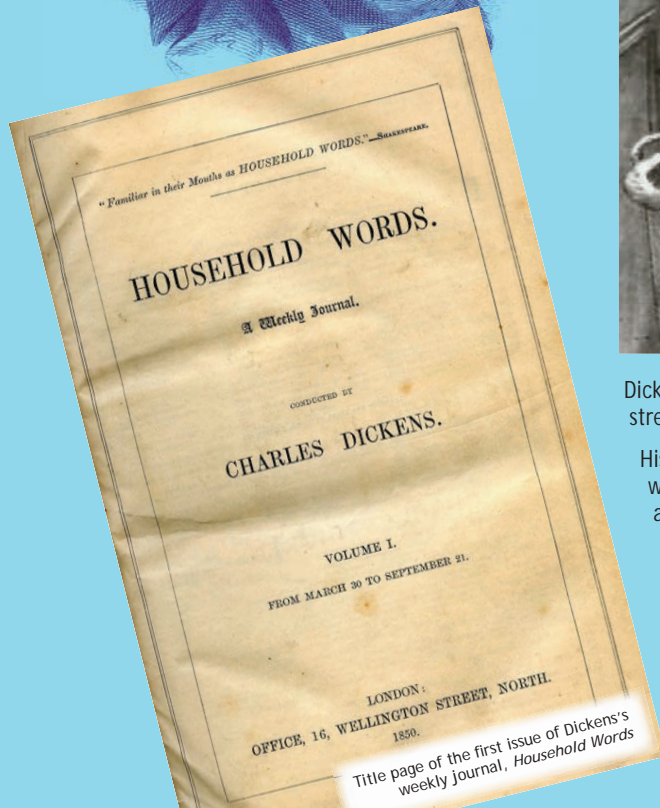
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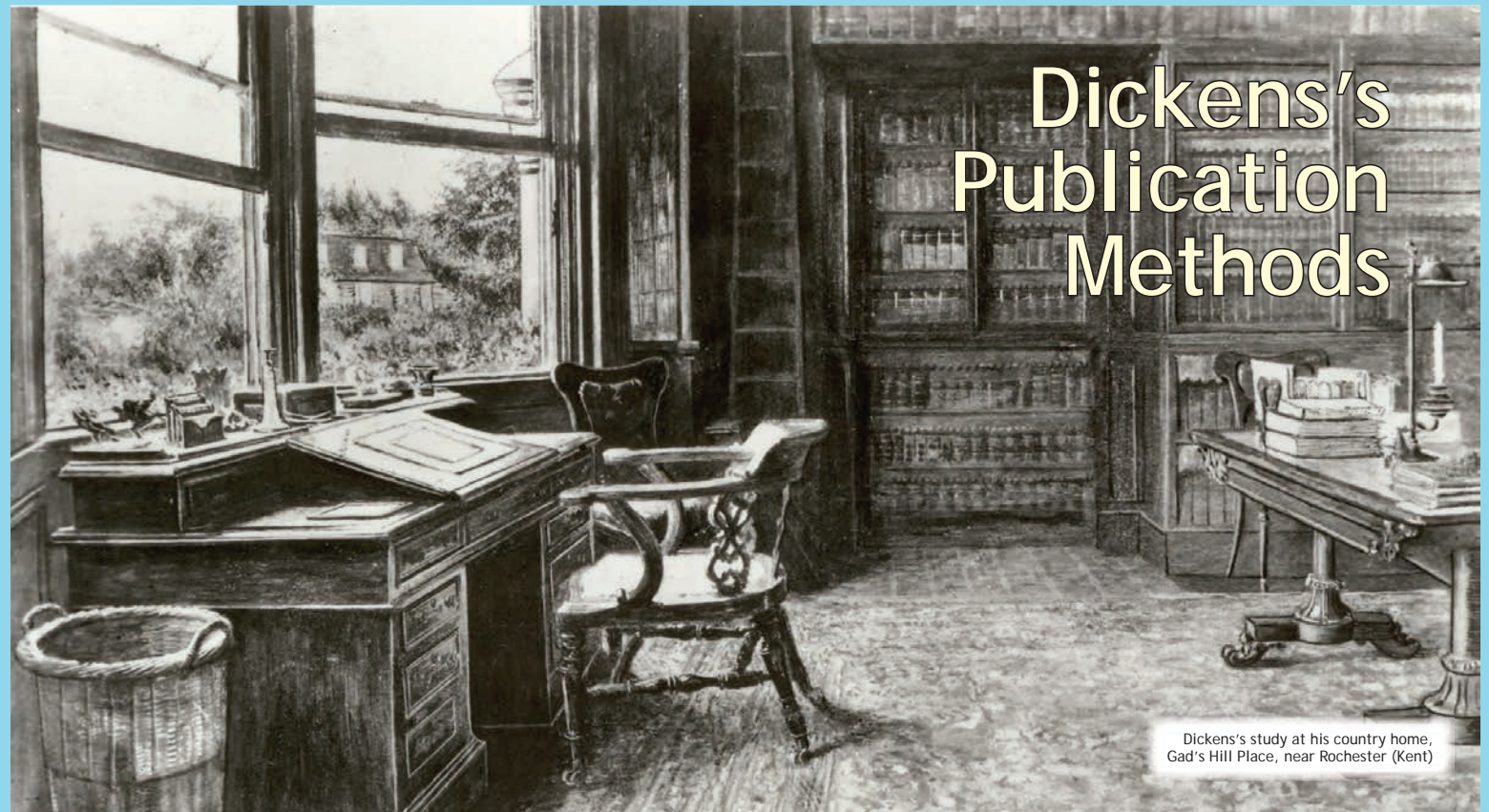
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Title page of the first issue of Dickens's weekly journal, *Household Words*



Dickens's study at his country home, Gad's Hill Place, near Rochester (Kent)

Dickens's career coincided with the expansion and professionalisation of publishing. He took advantage of improvements in book technology and distribution, strengthened copyright laws, and the expansion of the reading public, to ensure that his works reached the widest possible audience.

His first publications appeared in newspapers and magazines. Initially Dickens wrote sketches, for which he received a weekly wage; these were collected into what became his first book: *Sketches by Boz* (1836, 1837, 1839). He then entered into more complicated agreements with publishers, in which he served as both author of individual pieces, and editor of the whole publication. This was the case for both *Bentley's Miscellany* (in which *Oliver Twist* appeared, 1837-9) and *Master Humphrey's Clock* (in which Dickens published both *The Old Curiosity Shop* [1840-1] and *Barnaby Rudge* [1841]). He later issued his own weekly magazines (*Household Words* and *All the Year Round*), in which, among many other contributions, he published *Hard Times* (1854), *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859), and *Great Expectations* (1860-1).

Dickens's most famous and most often used publishing method for his fiction was the standard format of twenty monthly parts, each containing thirty-two pages of text and two illustrations, together with a host of advertisements for goods and services. This format had advantages for publishers, authors, readers, and businesses alike. Dickens used this innovative method (which he popularised) throughout his career, from *Pickwick Papers* (1836-7) through to his unfinished *Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870). Once the serial run (which took a year and a half) was completed, Dickens's publishers issued the texts in volume format, in several editions, from the Cheap Edition (in double columns without illustrations), to the much finer Charles Dickens Edition (in patterned boards, with Dickens's signature embossed on the cover).

